

Dichotomy or Continuity Between the Present and Past Dispensations

Closing Statement

Dr. Mal Couch 09-19-2002

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Warner has done us all a favor by putting up on this website [See Warner's Opening Argument, and Warner's post on the CTS Discussion Forum,] some of the quotes from the church Fathers. We can now see how confused the Fathers were. They mix up antichrist, the Roman Empire, the church, the kingdom, tribulation, in one big mess. They jumble verses and apply them to their own present situation. Their confusion clearly led (finally) to amillennialism that spiritualized Israel and made the church the kingdom. While the church Fathers were closer to the events of the New Testament, they had no systematic approach to the Bible. They saw the terrible things that were coming upon the Jewish people, they saw the looming shadow of defeat coming against the Roman Empire, and they had no sense of timing in terms of the long extent of years that were to come in history.

Warner is so fascinated by the Fathers, he seems to consider their proclamations as infallible as the Roman Catholic Church would. As proven by scholar Dr. Larry Crutchfield, the Fathers had glimpses of dispensationalism, they still had trouble “rightly dividing the Word of truth.”

Warner has clearly constructed his views from the church Fathers. So as you read Warner, you can see he jumbles their “church” thoughts, using Old and New Testaments.

We now have a new systematic theology called **The Warner’s Fathers Theology**. This is so unfortunate because the greatest scholar on the church Fathers in the last century, Leroy Edwin Froom, agrees with me. He writes:

The church Fathers writings are in sharp contrast to the inspired Scriptures of the apostles. These successors were already definitely influenced by the sophistries of the day, which had introduced such legends as that of the phoenix, and other fables. The very inferiority of these writings enables us to attach a higher value to the superiority of the canonical writings of the apostles, for their fragmentary works were but lingering echoes, in distorted form, of those vital messages before them, written under inspiration.

Froom agrees with me on the confused nature of the church Fathers’ writings, writings that Warner seems to love so much. **Froom helps us see how Warner is so confused in his following and touting the church Fathers. Warner constructs his theology from the known mistakes of the Fathers. Warner believes what the Fathers say is great, and he lays claim to their confused posttribulationism.**

Thank you Warner for showing us your theology comes almost directly from the church Fathers! Froom writes:

In common with many of the fathers, Irenaeus fails to distinguish between the new earth re-created in its eternal state, the thousand years of Revelation 20, when the saints are with Christ after His second advent, and the Jewish traditions of the Messianic kingdom. Hence, he applies confused Biblical and traditional ideas to his description of this earth during the millennium, throughout the closing chapters of book 5. Although Irenaeus was tinctured with Jewish tradition on the Millennium, he was not looking for a Jewish kingdom. He definitely interpreted Israel as the Christian church, the “spiritualized seed of Abraham.

Because he is so in love with the church Fathers, could it be that Warner and other PDs are going to slowly get away from seeing millennial concepts as specifically belonging to Israel, as the Old Testament would clearly show?

Many believe that this is the goal of the PD's! While claiming to be concerned for Israel, could it be that this is a secret plan to rid us of our support for Israel?

Notice: Watch where men like Warner and other PD's go with their theological development!

Hitting Pay Dirt

In this debate with Warner we have arrived! We now see Warner's agenda. Warner is trying to drag the reader back to old, warmed over arguments of posttribulationism. And, he is attempting to use smoke and mirrors to try as hard as he can to destroy a clear biblical pretribulationist rapture of the church.

Beware all readers! He is drawing you into a non-biblical net. In my experience I've found a great hatred of the biblical pretribulationist rapture by folks like Warner, but the arguments are never based on sound interpretation that must keep in mind not only specific words, but specific contexts. Why do heretical groups want to destroy this clear teaching of the Word of God? Reader, watch out!

For the record, I tightly exegeted thirteen verses that clearly teach the rapture view. I found that many amillennialists even admitted that these verses teach this. The pretribulationist rapture is absolutely biblical and exegetically defensible. The problem is folks like Warner have not been taught good hermeneutics that keep in mind CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT!

By the way, Warner is great in knocking down positions but short on giving a clear picture of what he is saying! I urge the readers to stick with tried and true giants of the faith who have helped us understand clearly what the Bible is saying!

For example, Dr. John Walvoord clearly understands where a Warner is going with his hodge-podge theology. He points out in his fifty year old book *The Millennial Kingdom*:
Posttribulationists

1. argue that the church will be preserved through the tribulation.
2. argue poorly that the expression tribulation “saint” means church saint. (It does not-context, context, context!)

3. argue that the resurrection just before the millennium is the church resurrection. (It is not!)
4. argue that similar words concerning the rapture and Christ's return to reign are the same. (Context, context, context!)
5. argue that the church goes into the tribulation because of 2 Thessalonians 2 and the teaching on the apostasy and the man of sin. (Note what Paul DOES NOT SAY! Sounds like Warner to me!)
6. argue that the rapture is in Matthew 24:30. (Boy, IS IT NOT!)

Walvoord then notes:

Generally speaking, posttribulationists are content **to attack other points of view rather than setting forth their own arguments**. Actually the church is never found in any portion of Scripture dealing with the time of the tribulation, and the translation of the church is never mentioned in any passage picturing the return of Christ to set up His millennial kingdom. Posttribulationism is built principally upon the identification of the church with tribulation saints, a conclusion which is without substantiation in Scripture. Posttribulationists cannot cite a single passage where this confusion is justified, and their arguments as a whole have been often refuted. For this reason most through-going premillennarians have abandoned the posttribulation position as not being the hope for the rapture of the church taught in Scripture. (p. 249-50)

Sound like Warner? Of course it does!

Warner quotes Darby from Dave MacPherson's booklet *The Rapture Plot*, one of the most "outstanding" theological works ever produced, ahem. By the way, with Warner quoting this work, we know he is sneaking up on you the reader to try to destroy the clear and biblical pretribulation rapture of the church. By using this quote, Warner's true colors are coming out: he hates this teaching! But more, both Warner and MacPherson really show they do not understand hermeneutics, or what Darby was saying.

Darby said, "*earthly things were the Jews' proper portion*" and "*the church was a system of heavenly hopes ... it is ... symbolized by analogous agencies.*"

Warner writes "*Darby settled for a literal hermeneutic where Israel was concerned, and accepted an allegorical one where the Church is concerned.*"

Warner missed it again. "Symbolism" is not a contradiction to literal interpretation. Symbolism is actually under the umbrella of literal interpretation, i.e., literal interpretation INCLUDES signs, poetry, types, symbols, figures of speech, etc.

All Darby meant by "symbolized by analogous agencies" was that the church, with its heavenly hope, is described as "the bride of Christ," the "body of Christ," etc. The church is still a "literal" body but its hope is heaven. Symbolism is not the opposite of allegorism. (Warner shows a

limitation in his understanding of hermeneutics.) Allegory is the opposite of literal or normal interpretation. Allegory says there is a secondary meaning not expressed by normal words. Allegorical interpretation believes that beneath the letter or the obvious is the real meaning of the passage.” (See my book *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics [Kregel]*) And if you do not believe me, read the classic on interpretation *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* by Ramm.

Warner says “Darby’s system was a hybrid formed from the ‘heavenly destiny’ ideas of amillennialism.” How does Warner come up with this? Amillennialists are the ones who **allegorize** the kingdom and make it the church in a “spiritualized” way. Warner then says that Darby

“made the [Jews] a second-class citizens, an ‘earthly people,’ while the church is supposed to be a ‘heavenly people.’”

Readers, please read your Old Testament! The earthly kingdom promises to Israel occupy what seems to be endless chapters in the prophets. Israel has been given standing earthly promises. The nation will be restored to the land, have the Son of David, Christ, rule over them, see peace brought to the world, see Jerusalem rebuilt, experience nature tamed, etc. It is Warner who is deprecating the Scriptures and somehow mocking the “earthly promises,” and “earthly people” the Jews, and their hopes.

Warner then reveals his limited knowledge of hermeneutics when he says this is “apartheid of the elect.” He fails to apply solid interpretation and realize that there is the elect of the Old Testament and the elect of the church. Warner needs to remember: CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT!

Warner mistakenly writes: **Gentile believers are not destined for some “heavenly” hope, apart from the Kingdom where Israel will be the head of the nations.”**

Warner misses it again. The Church is a distinct body for this dispensation, made up of Jews and Gentiles. It is the church that has the heavenly hope, but also, the raptured church will return with Christ to enjoy the kingdom blessings. But nowhere in the Old or New Testament is the church seen as the “central” earthly kingdom people. It will be restored Israel, with the church enjoying the triumph and reign of Christ. This has never been denied by true biblical dispensationalists. Israel is God’s earthly “centerpiece of God’s plan” as Warner says.

Warner mistakenly writes: **“[Israel] was never set aside so that God could do a new thing with the Gentiles.”** (Oh really!)

In Paul’s day, as today, Jew and Gentile by faith are joined to the spiritual body of Christ, and form the heavenly people, the church. The earthly task of the church is daunting. The church is to be both serving and waiting for God’s Son from heaven “who is the Rescuer of us from the wrath ‘on its way’” (1 Thess. 1:9-10, Greek).

National Israel is set aside. Warner is countered by the Word of God, and especially by the apostle Paul. While individual Jews may come to Christ, and come into the body of Christ-the church-God is not now dealing with Israel as a national entity. Paul says clearly Israel as a national people were set aside. It escapes me why this is so hard for Warner to understand, not only from what Scripture says, but by what history obviously has shown.

Despite what Warner says, what does the Bible say, especially Paul?

**By their [Israel's] transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11).
If [Israel's] transgression be riches for the world [the Gentiles] and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be? (v. 12).
If their [Israel's] rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (v. 15).
You [Gentiles] will say then, [the natural] Branches were broken off so that I [a Gentile] might be grafted in. Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief (vs. 19-20).
This mystery ... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (v. 25).
Wrath to this national people, then **they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:23-24).****

Warner is repeating himself. He tries to tie biblical dispensationalists with the ancient Gnostics because of the biblical word "mystery." He is actually denying what the apostle Paul says about the church as a mystery. Warner is really attacking Scripture. Almost no one agrees with what he says about the word as used in the context of the church. Remember what Dr. Walvoord said about posttribulationists like Warner. They spend most of the time telling you what a Bible verse does not mean!

Warner is stuck on Romans 16:26-27 in an attempt to get rid of the fact that the church is a newly revealed body that comes together through the gospel. He is particularly hung up on the phrase "the Scriptures of the prophets." But Warner fails to deal with what went before. Paul clearly said **Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation OF THE MYSTERY WHICH HAS BEEN KEPT SECRET FOR LONG AGES PAST.**

Warner contradicts Paul and says "the mystery was indeed contained in the prophecies of Israel."

Biblical dispensationalists are pointing out that the mystery is especially spelled out in Ephesians 2-3, and as here in Romans 16 it has to do with "the preaching of Jesus Christ," and this message is now "made known to all the nations leading to obedience of faith."

Now about the expression that hangs Warner up: "the Scriptures of the prophets."

The great Greek scholar Robert Godet says the expression should better be translated the *prophetical Scriptures*. Godet further points out that Paul speaks of the New Testament holy apostles *and prophets* in Ephesians 3:3-6. Godet then writes

Paul himself feels that the letter he has just written (Romans) has this character, and that it ranks among the means which God is using to carry out the publication of this new revelation. It is therefore of this very letter, as well as of the other letters which had proceeded from his pen, or from that of his colleagues, that he is speaking in our Romans passage. And from this point of view the absence of the article [before prophetical] is easily explained. Paul really means: "by prophetical writings." It is as it were a new series of inspired writings coming to complete the collection of the ancient and well-known books, even as the new revelation is the completion of the old.

In opposition to Warner the revered Greek scholar Charles Hodge says, "The word 'mystery', according to the common scriptural sense of the term, does **not** mean

something obscure or incomprehensible, but simply something previously unknown and undiscoverable by human reason. ... According to the passage [here in Romans 16] Paul speaks of the gospel as something 'which had been kept secret since the world began.'"

Ellicott writes about this Romans 16 passage that the Old Testament Scriptures were simply a corroboration to the gospel and its coming to the Gentile nations. But this truth was indeed a mystery never before revealed. Ellicott continues

The word "mystery" is used elsewhere in the New Testament precisely in the sense which is so clearly defined in this Romans passage of something which up to the time of the Apostles had remained secret, but had then been made known by divine intervention. The "mystery" thus revealed is the same as that described in the two preceding clauses-in one word Christianity. All through the Old Testament dispensation, the Christian scheme, which was then future, had remained hidden.

Warner then goes off and spends pages trying to prove his point by pulling up the usage of the word "mystery" in a bunch of different CONTEXTS. Biblical dispensationalists stick to the issues. Even our critics call us TEXTUAL. What does the TEXT say? What does the text say about the unique message of the gospel as it saves people and places them in the spiritual body of Christ? THIS IS THE ISSUE and this was not mentioned in the Old Testament!

Warner writes "But, where is the mystery of the Church in Scripture? To Dr. Couch, the "Church" appears to be an entity totally distinct from God's program for Israel."

One more time, let's look at the major passages:

You have heard of the **dispensation of God's grace given to me** for you that by **revelation was made known to me the mystery** you can understand my **insight into the MYSTERY of Christ, WHICH IN OTHER GENERATIONS WAS NOT MADE KNOWN TO THE**

SONS OF MEN, as it has NOW BEEN REVEALED to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

to be specific THAT THE GENTILES ARE FELLOW HEIRS, AND FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE BODY, AND FELLOW PARTAKERS OF THE PROMISE IN CHRIST JESUS THROUGH THE GOSPEL.

To me ... was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY which for ages has been hidden in God ...

The wisdom of God now made known through the church ... This was in accordance with the eternal purpose He carried out in CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

Warner asks “Where is this mystery of the Church?” How can he read this passage and ask this question? How can Warner say **The “mystery” was the whole redemption plan, contained in the Old Testament.** Psalm 22 speaks of the death of the Messiah; Isaiah 53 speaks of His substitution. But none of these passages see Him dying for Gentiles, and especially this new thing that will be revealed, which is the church comprised of Jew AND Gentile.

I urge the reader to further look at Colossians 1:24-29. Paul is clear on all of this where Warner is confused. Becoming even more confusing, Warner writes “the mystery was hidden, **because it was necessary so the crucifixion could occur.** Warner then adds, **Had God revealed His redemption plan clearly in the Old Testament, Satan would not have caused Judas to betray Jesus. Had Satan known the mystery, he never would have caused the Jews to kill their Messiah.**

Can you believe what Warner is writing?

Warner theology says the was something that was not completely unknown. Warner defies what the apostle Paul says. He spends pages trying to show that on certain occasions the word “mystery” sometimes used does not mean "unknown", simply "not comprehended".

But Warner does not exegete carefully. He can't! Otherwise, he would have to be in the biblical dispensationalist camp. And he can't be, because he has another secret agenda in his arguments.

Paul says the “mystery” was about the “stewardship” (dispensation) of God’s grace “given to Paul exclusively.” It “was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery” (Eph. 3:2-3), and he was given “insight into the mystery of Christ” (v. 4) “which was not made known to the sons of men” (v. 5), “to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs **and fellow members of the body**” (v. 6) the spiritual body of Christ, **the “two into one,” the “new man,” the “one body to God through the cross”** (2:15-16). He is talking about the church “administration” (dispensation) “of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God” (3:9).

How could Paul be anymore clear? What is missing from this picture? Nothing.

The Church was not seen in the Old Testament, and simply “misunderstood” or “overlooked, ignored” as Warner contends. It was “**hidden in God.**”

How could Paul be anymore clear when he writes in Colossians:

His body (which is the church) ... of this church I WAS MADE A MINISTER ACCORDING TO THE STEWARDSHIP (DISPENSATION) FROM GOD bestowed ON ME ...the MYSTERY WHICH HAS BEEN HIDDEN from the past ages and generations; but now has been MANIFESTED TO HIS SAINTS, to whom God willed to MAKE KNOWN WHAT IS THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF THIS MYSTERY Among the GENTILES, which is Christ in you, the Hope OF GLORY (1:24-28).

I will repeat what the Bible says about Gentile salvation: The blessing aspect of the Abrahamic covenant says that “all nations will be blessed through you [Abraham]” (Gen. 12:3). We can now look back and see that it would be salvation for the Gentiles through the death of Christ and the spiritual applications of the New covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-on only sees that covenant applied to Israel. However, now with *progressive revelation*, we can see that the New covenant was ratified by Christ’s death and launched at Pentecost, benefiting both Jew and Gentile. Together Jews and Gentiles are placed into the body of Christ. This incredible phenomenon was not revealed in the Old Testament. Paul was the key apostle to whom this revelation was made. Look again at Ephesians 2-3.

On Ephesians 2:11-22

Warner continues his poor and limited exegesis on this passage. Paul will not go where Warner wants him to. Paul never says the Gentiles are place into the commonwealth of Israel. In fact, the apostle says Israel’s Law was “enmity” that Christ abolished in His body (v. 15). Why would Gentiles be tied back to the theocracy of Israel? Warner does not make sense. Instead, Paul goes forward and creates a whole new deal that he labels in all of his writings "the church." To repeat, this new body, the church, is made up like this:

He made both groups into one (not by placing the Gentiles into old Israel) v.14
Abolished the Law, the enmity (v. 15)
Made the two groups (Israel & the Gentiles) INTO ONE NEW MAN (v. 15)
Reconciled them in ONE BODY (not into Israel) (v. 15)
Now the two are God’s household (v. 19)
New foundation, the NT apostles and prophets (not Israel) (v. 20)
The whole building fitted together (v. 21)
Growing into a holy temple IN THE LORD (v. 21)
Built TOGETHER (JEW & GENTILE) into a dwelling of God (v. 22)

Finally, it is so sad to see how Warner removes the hope of heaven from so many verses of Scripture. This not only defies what the Bible says, but it comes against all of those who have

longed for the splendor and glory of heaven. The church is indeed a “heavenly people.” We have no final hope in this dispensation except heaven.

While it is true that the word “glory” is sometimes used as a “state” of being, or a specific description of God or Christ, it is also used as a place, contrary to what Warner says. Also, in many passages where the “glory of God” is mentioned, it really is referring to Him in heaven. Warner is again wrong to remove the “heavenly” and glorious destiny from the hope of the church.

My dear grandmother and father cried on their death beds for their heavenly destiny, and to see their glorious home of heaven. Shame on Warner!

1. Paul says we should set our minds on things above and not on things that are on earth, because when Christ is revealed **you will be revealed with Him in glory (Col. 3:2-4).**
2. Paul writes of Christ **taken up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16).**
3. God called you to His **eternal glory in Christ (1 Pet. 5:10).**
4. When God spoke from heaven at the mount of transfiguration, He was called the **Majestic Glory (2 Pet, 1:16).**
5. We will someday stand in **the presence of His glory blameless (Jude 24).**

On the church and its heavenly destiny I stand with the great Edinburgh Scottish preacher Robert Leighton who wrote on 1 Peter 1:5:

He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you; who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The salvation which Christ has purchased is, indeed, laid up in heaven, but we who seek after it, are on earth, compassed about with dangers and temptations. What avails it us, that our salvation is in heaven, in the place of safety and quietness, while we ourselves are tossed upon the stormy seas of this world, amidst rocks and shelves, every hour in danger of shipwreck? Our inheritance is in a sure hand indeed, our enemies cannot come at it; but they may overrun and destroy us at their pleasure, for we are in the midst of them. Thus might we think and complain, and lose the sweetness of all our other thoughts concerning heaven, if there were not as firm a promise for our own safety in the midst of our dangers, as there is of the safety of our inheritance that is out of danger.

The assurance is full, thus; it is kept for us in heaven, and we kept on earth for it; as it is reserved for us. - Robert Leighton

According to Warner, this biblical fact of the church having a “heavenly destiny” kills Progressive Dispensationalism.

I couldn't agree more! - **Dr. Mal Couch**